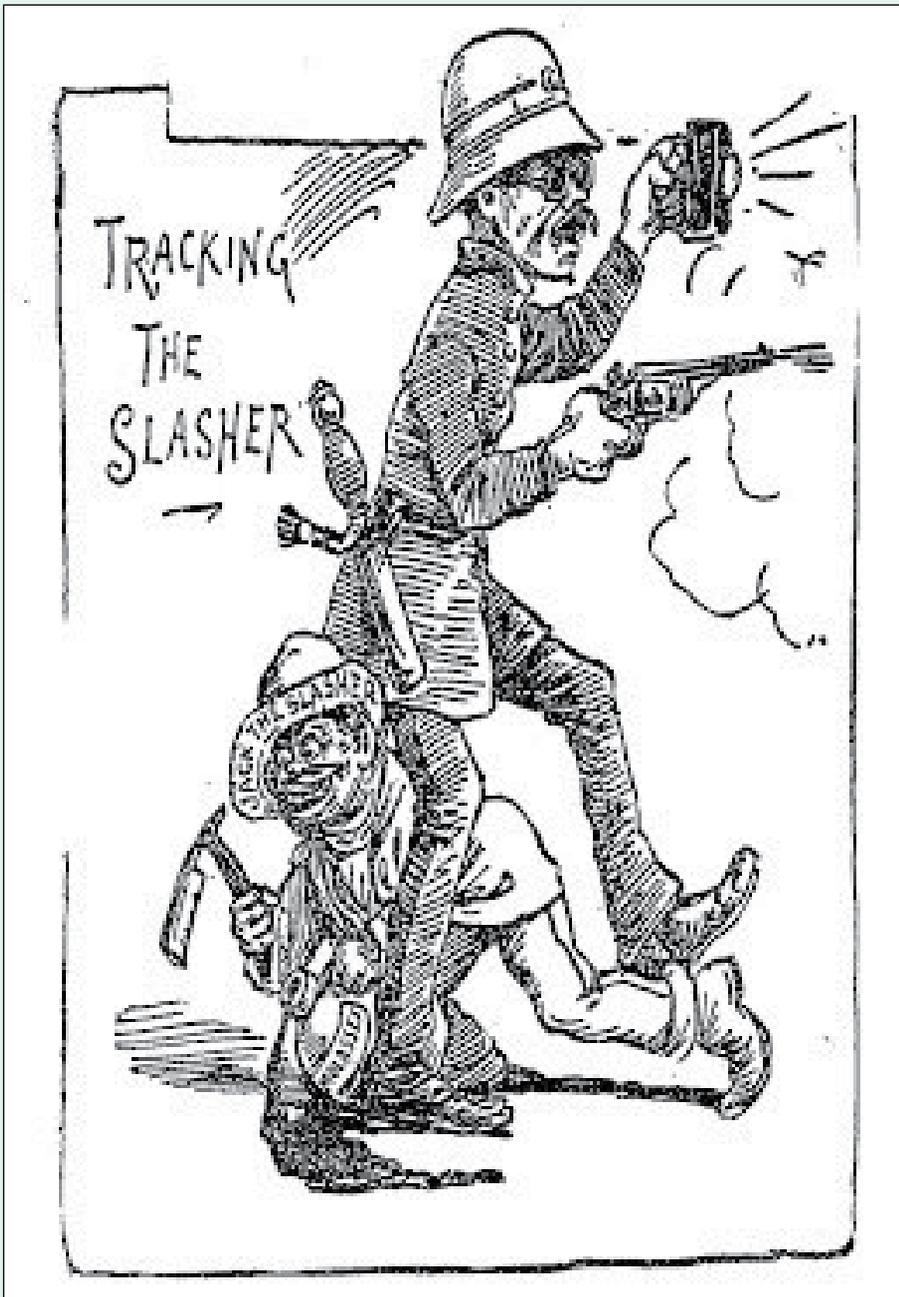


Scenes from the Past



This cartoon ran in *The Washington Post* on March 20, 1894, the day following Jack the Slasher's arrest.

The winter months from 1893 to 1894 were full of terror for all Washington residents. Why, you ask?

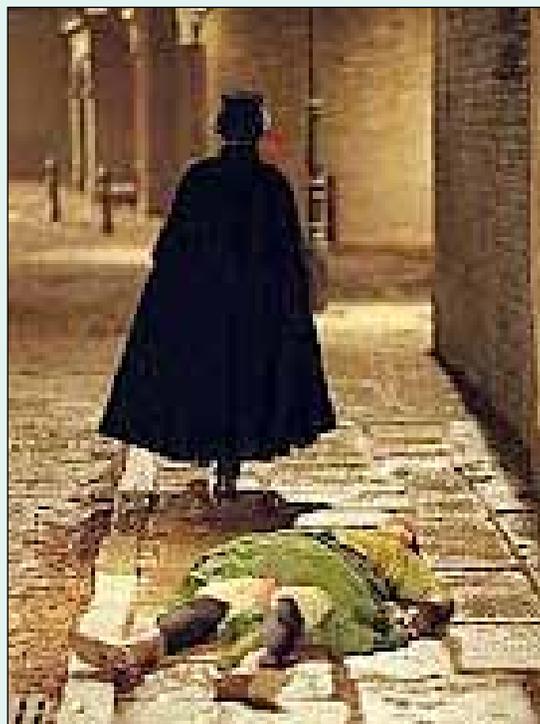
Because the Washington area had its own version of London's famous "Jack the Ripper." The tormentor was nicknamed Jack, and the mere mention of his name terrified children and adults alike. And we all would have been too: There was an average of 15 slashings a month!

"Every householder before retiring [to bed] locked or bolted every door in the house and put a chair under the doorknob as well . . . no burglar as daring as this one could remain unapprehended for long," wrote the *Sunday Evening Star*. His victims included residents from Fort Myer in northern Virginia to the District of Columbia and to Takoma Park, Maryland.

It wasn't until March 19, 1894 that police thought they had caught "Jack the Slasher" inside a Tenleytown house belonging to Judge Governor Hunt, near the intersection of River Road and what was then still known as Rockville Pike and is now Wisconsin Avenue, NW.

"George Taylor, alias, Jones, arrested yesterday at Tenleytown," reported the *Evening Star* on the following day, "evidence of various kinds points to him as being that much-hunted-for person. In his pockets were found the tools that the

slasher must have used in his singular work of destruction — razors and sharp knives — and all were stuffed with small pieces of cloth and dress goods, mementos



illus.—Kelsey & Assoc. private collection.

toes of his little trips. . . . If he is "Jack the Slasher," though, he will probably never be sent to prison. An insane asylum will be his future home, for Taylor is undoubtedly a crazy man — a person not of a violent manner, but one whose brain does not control his actions in conjunction with his conscience."

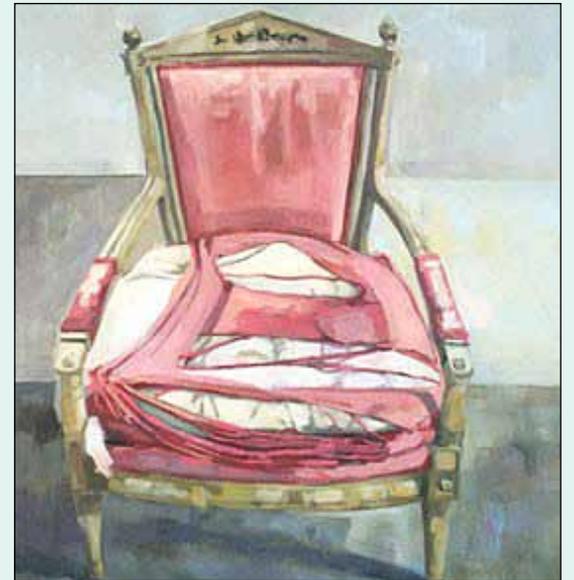
Richard Sylvester's 1894 history of the police department included a poem that illustrates the state of panic that all Washingtonians were in that winter, and that "Jack the Slasher" did all sorts of additional unsavory things to his victims:

The bedstead's on the mantel piece,
The clock is on the floor,
The cooking-stove is on the roof,
The bolt's slid in the door.

The cat's in the lasses jug,
The dogs's tail in a loop,
The milk's in sister's slipper,
The household's in the soup.

I cannot stand the impudence,
Of horrid Jack the Slasher."

Jack went into the neighbor house,
He heard an awful snore,
He didn't stop at anything,
He even slammed the door.



illus.—Kelsey & Assoc. private collection.



illus.—Kelsey & Assoc. private collection.

The tired sleeper lay out-stretched,
His features drawn and pale,
The coat nearby was closely trimmed,
With knife-slits down the tail.

The sleeper, in his peaceful dream,
Heard no distressful call,
And cared less how prolonged & sad,
Was his neighbors's mighty bawl.

Smiles were Jack's while others wept,
As he hastily withdrew.
So soundly the M.P. slept,
Not even said "Adieu."

Taylor was caught by a milkman, Charles Wise, who had glimpsed him through Judge Hunt's venetian blinds. "He did not attempt to get away, but remained there until the arrival of the officers. He did not seem to realize that he was being arrested when officers Easley and Law took hold of him... a big sigh of relief went up all over town, and everybody breathed more easily" the *Evening Star* reported.

His 15 slashings per month had come to an end. He was sentenced to 30 years in the Federal Penitentiary in Albany, New York.

Oh, by the way, he didn't slash people. He spent months breaking into homes to slash their drapes, evening dresses, sofas, upholstered chairs, and ottomans.

Taylor obviously didn't like the fabric of society!

—Paul Kelsey Williams
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"Police! Police!" the father cried,
"Come save the bathroom splasher;
Too late, too late, it's cut in shreds,
By doughty Jack the Slasher."

He fitted on my undershirt,
He smoked my cigarettes,
He used my well-worn toothbrush,
He gave notes for my debts.

He rang the doorbell loud and well,
He turned on all the gas,
He sat down on the door-step,
He saw the Police pass.

"Police! Police!" the father cried,
"Come catch the naughty dasher;